

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested. Claims 1-54 are pending in the application, with claims 1, 16, 24 and 35 being the independent claims.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 1-54 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,373,463 to Beeks (“the Beeks patent”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,766,016 to Sinclair et al. (“the Sinclair patent”).

Independent Claim 1 and its Dependent Claims

Independent claim 1 recites, “outputting haptic feedback associated with a simulated palpation of a region within the graphical environment.” In the specification, the Applicants define palpation to mean “any therapeutic, diagnostic or other procedure where a medical practitioner *contacts a patient with a portion of the medical practitioner’s body*, such as one or more fingers and/or hands, and utilizes his or her sense of touch to treat, diagnose or otherwise care for or administer to the patient” (emphasis added). (See specification at page 9, lines 20-24).

The Examiner states that the Beeks patent does not include a palpation region, but that the Sinclair patent shows “a surgical simulator with tactile feedback.” While the Sinclair patent does disclose a surgical simulator, the Sinclair patent fails to disclose “outputting *haptic feedback associated with a simulated palpation* of a region within the graphical environment” as recited in independent claim 1. The device disclosed in the Sinclair patent uses simulated surgical tools as an interface between the simulated body part and the user of the device and, thus does not disclose or suggest “simulated palpation” as recited in independent claim 1. The Sinclair patent is utterly silent with respect to palpation. The simulated eyeball surgery disclosed

in the Sinclair patent does not include palpation (i.e., a procedure in which a medical practitioner contacts a patient with a portion of the medical practitioner's body, such as one or more fingers and/or hands, and utilizes his or her sense of touch to treat, diagnose or otherwise care for or administer to the patient).

Hence, the references, either alone or in combination, fail to render obvious independent claim 1. Based at least on their dependence upon independent claim 1, dependent claims 2-15 are also allowable.

Independent Claim 16 and its Dependent Claims

Independent claim 16 recites "outputting haptic feedback based on a signal associated with an interaction of the cursor with a graphical representation of a simulated being, the haptic feedback being a simulated pulse of the simulated being."

As discussed above, the Examiner states that the Beeks patent fails to disclose a palpation region and that the Sinclair patent discloses a surgical simulator with tactile feedback. Neither of the references discloses, however, "haptic feedback being a simulated pulse of [a] simulated being" as recited in independent claim 16. In fact, the Office Action is silent with respect to the elements recited in claim 16.

Hence, the references, either alone or in combination, fail to render obvious independent claim 16. Based at least on their dependence upon independent claim 16, dependent claims 17-23 are also allowable.

Independent Claim 24 and its Dependent Claims

Independent claim 24 recites "outputting haptic feedback based on interaction of the cursor with a graphical representation within the graphical environment, the haptic feedback

simulating a palpated feature that is one of on and below the surface of the graphical representation.”

As noted above, in the specification, the Applicants define palpation to mean “any therapeutic, diagnostic or other procedure where a medical practitioner contacts a patient with a portion of the medical practitioner’s body, such as one or more fingers and/or hands, and utilizes his or her sense of touch to treat, diagnose or otherwise care for or administer to the patient.” (See specification at page 9, lines 20-24).

As discussed above, the Examiner states that the Beeks patent fails to disclose a palpation region and that the Sinclair patent discloses a surgical simulator with tactile feedback. Neither of the references discloses, however, “the haptic feedback simulating a palpated feature that is one of on and below the surface of the graphical representation” as recited in independent claim 24. In fact, the Office Action is silent with respect to the elements recited in independent claim 24. As noted above, the Sinclair patent is silent with respect to palpation.

Hence, the references, either alone or in combination, fail to render obvious independent claim 24. Based at least on their dependence upon independent claim 24, dependent claims 25-34 are also allowable.

Independent Claim 35 and its Dependent Claims

Independent claim 35 recites “an actuator coupled to the manipulatable object to output haptic feedback based on interaction of the cursor with a region within the graphical representation, the haptic feedback simulating a palpation of the simulated being.” As noted above, in the specification, the Applicants define palpation to mean “any therapeutic, diagnostic or other procedure where a medical practitioner contacts a patient with a portion of the medical practitioner’s body, such as one or more fingers and/or hands, and utilizes his or her sense of

touch to treat, diagnose or otherwise care for or administer to the patient.” (See specification at page 9, lines 20-24).

The Examiner states that the Beeks patent does not include a palpation region, but that the Sinclair patent shows “a surgical simulator with tactile feedback.” While the Sinclair patent does disclose a surgical simulator, the Sinclair patent fails to disclose “the haptic feedback *simulating a palpation* of the simulated being” as recited in independent claim 35. The device disclosed in the Sinclair patent uses simulated surgical tools as an interface between the simulated body part and the user of the device, and thus does not disclose or suggest “simulating a palpation” as recited in independent claim 35.

Hence, the references, either alone or in combination, fail to render obvious independent claim 35. Based at least on their dependence upon independent claim 35, dependent claims 36-54 are also allowable.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

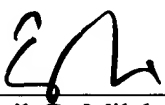
Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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